

# McGonigal's Pub owner says lack of foot traffic and video gaming in Barrington factored into closure



McGonigal's Pub in Barrington will close at the end of the month after nearly 14 years downtown.  
Rick West | Staff Photographer

[Rick West](#)



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The owner of [McGonigal's Pub](#) said after nearly 14 years in downtown Barrington he just couldn't afford to keep subsidizing a business that couldn't sustain itself.

[On Monday, the Irish pub announced](#) on its website and social media channels that it would close at the end of the year.

"We've had a great run, but unfortunately the burden became too great," Bryan McGonigal said a couple of days after the announcement. "We've been putting family money into it for a long while hoping we could turn things around, and we tried everything possible to be able to actually make it work but we just don't have the foot traffic."

The pub opened in a former bank in downtown Barrington at 105 S. Cook St., in March 2010.

McGonigal said he just wasn't able to get enough people in the door to cover his costs.

"Barrington is wonderful, there are awesome people that live here, but the town is small and inevitably it comes down to the foot traffic," he said. "This isn't new, we kind of figured this out after the first couple of years."

McGonigal said it's hard to get people from out of the area to come to downtown Barrington when neighboring towns like Arlington Heights and Palatine have more robust entertainment districts.

"We're supported, but it's leveled off and we've never found a way to make it better or at least enough to be viable," he said.

McGonigal said he's not pointing fingers and said it's every business owner's responsibility to adapt and adjust, but one thing that would have helped is legalized video gambling in village, which he said he pushed for the past 10 years.

"It hurts because at a minimum it would have paid for our taxes and a lot of our overhead," he said. "Without it, it kind of crippled us in terms of what could have been. It costs the proprietor nothing. It's like free money."

When deciding he couldn't keep carrying the business at his family's expense, his immediate concern was for his 38 employees, 15 of which are full-time. He informed them Monday morning before making the closure public.

"The staff's the most important part, I literally get sick to my stomach and haven't been able to sleep just thinking about all these great people that I have working for me," he said.

McGonigal and his family own the building, which has been for sale since 2020.

"As of Jan. 1, unless there's a Christmas miracle, it'll be vacant," he said.

Plans are in motion for an "end of an era" event the last few days of the month. "We're going to make the best of a bad situation," he added.

McGonigal said he considered reopening in another location, but on a smaller scale and in a town that allows video gambling. The two-story McGonigal's location in Barrington has about 5,000 square feet with additional space currently being used for events next door.

"What I initially wanted to do was a more rowdy, music-driven, fun place to drink," he said. "I wanted an Irish pub and I ended up opening a restaurant."

McGonigal said he learned a lot about what works and what doesn't during his first foray into the business.

"I'm never going to say I've been the best owner. I clearly could have done a lot of things better," he said. "But we still managed to make it work for a long time."